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THE

SCHOOL FOR AUTHORS:

A COMEDY.

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THE

SCHOOL FOR AUTHORS:

A COMEDY,

IN THREE ACTS.

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AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET,

BY THEIR MAJESTIES SERVANTS, FROM THE THEATRE ROYAL COVENT-GARDEN.

BY THE LATE JOHN TOBIN, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF THE HONEY MOON, ETC.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, PATERNOSTER-ROW,

1808.

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J. M'Creery, Printer,
Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-street.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Diaper	Mr. MUNDEN.
Cleveland	Mr. BRUNTON.
Wormwood	Mr. FARLEY.
Jeffery	Mr. DAVENPORT.
Frank	Mr. JONES.
William	Mr. HOLLAND.
Jane Diaper	Miss NORTON.
Susan	Mrs. GIBBS.

THE

SCHOOL FOR AUTHORS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Diaper's House.*

Enter DIAPER, *followed by a Servant.*

DIAPER.

YOU took the letter to Mr. Wormwood?

Serv. Yes, sir; he'll wait on you immediately.

Diap. And have you told Mr. Cleveland that I wish to speak with him?

Serv. I have sir.

Diap. Very well. [*Exit Servant.* Cleveland shall be the man. I had some thoughts of trusting Wormwood, but he's an Author himself. No, no, Cleveland shall be the man.

Enter SERVANT.

Well?

Serv. Mr. Jeffery from the city, sir, wishes to speak with you.

Diap. Plague on him, what can he want? Send him up, [*Exit Servant.*

Just at this time too! I did hope when I had got fairly out of the sight of business, I should have lost the sound of it.

Enter JEFFERY.

Well, Jeff. the old subject I suppose?

Jeff. Yes, sir.

Diap. Business, eh?

Jeff. I came to tell you that the goods are all safely packed in the warehouse, and to know if you'll have 'em insured.

Diap. Not an article.—Let 'em take their chance. I insure my country house, 'tis true; why? because my manuscripts are all there. Any thing more? You know I hate business.

Jeff. Hate business? I remember when you lik'd nothing else.

Diap. And for that very reason, I'm now determined to like every thing else.

Jeff. Then you were the glory of Cheapside.

Diap. Yes, and the shame of every other place.

Jeff. Up every morning at seven, opened the shop-window yourself, in your green velvet night-cap, breakfasted at half-past, snug behind the counter by eight, stuck there till two as if you had been a piece of it, bolted a sheep's heart in the little back parlour with the curtain half open, to have an eye upon customers, and then at it again till nine.—Do you remember, sir?

Diap. I wish I could forget it. And then on a fine cutting day in December, when I used to stand on tip-toe, bare headed at a carriage door, whilst a committee of ladies were leisurely settling the exact shade of a riding ha-

bit, till my face was all the colours of a rainbow, and my nose ten degrees at least below the freezing point.

Jeff. Ah, sir, if you had but stuck to business as closely as business would have stuck to you, you might by this time have been in the high road to the mayoralty.

Diap. The mayoralty? That for the mayoralty! *(Snapping his fingers.)*

Jeff. I wish you could hear what your friends in the city say.

Diap. My friends in the city? Well, what do the rogues say?

Jeff. You'll be offended.

Diap. Not in the least:—they say I'm inspir'd, don't they?

Jeff. Oh, no;—they swear you're possess'd.

Diap. The agreeable dogs;—but proceed.

Jeff. They say you'll find Pegasus a friskier jade than your old pad nag.

Diap. Never mind that; every man has a right to choose his own hobby-horse—go on.

Jeff. That you wern't born a poet.

Diap. I'm determin'd to die one notwithstanding.

Jeff. That, instead of standing behind your counter, you're sitting all day cross-legg'd in your study, waiting for inspiration, like an old rusty conductor for a flash of lightning.

Diap. The rogues are witty.—Like an old rusty conductor—I like that.

Jeff. Ah, sir, when I recollect the snug com-

placent smile with which you used to close the ledger on a Saturday night, I can't help thinking what a face you must make when you strike a balance with your bookseller.

Diap. Hang profit! You don't suppose I write for money?

Jeff. I don't indeed, sir.

Diap. Parnassus! Pindus! Helicon! and the Aonian maids! and when I die, when as a certain poet (you may guess him) has somewhere expressed it,

"When the dark fates with silent tread,
"Cut with extended sheers my trembling mortal thread."

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Cleveland sir, is ready to wait on you.

Diap. I'll see him now.

Jeff. Then you won't have the goods insured?

Diap. Certainly not.

Jeff. Good morning. [*Exit.*

Diap. My friends in the city? I think by to-morrow I shall convince my friends in the city—but no matter—Cleveland is here.

Enter CLEVELAND.

Clevel. I obey your summons, sir.

Diap. I thank you.

Clevel. What are your commands with me?

Diap. A business of the most pressing nature. Sit down my dear Cleveland, sit down. (*They sit.*) I think, Cleveland, I have been a friend to you.

Clevel. Almost a father, sir.

Diap. Nay, nay that's extravagant. I have done you some little services.

Clevel. How can I repay them?

Diap. By conferring a favour on me, on which my reputation, and consequently my happiness, depends.

Clevel. Name it sir.

Diap. I think I may trust him. *(Aside.)*

Clevel. As I am fully persuaded you will ask nothing unbecoming an honourable mind to perform, I sacredly promise to comply with your request.

Diap. My dear fellow!—I'll certainly trust him. *(Aside.)* You know, my dear Cleveland, I have been for some time past a sort of a dabbler in poetry.

Clevel. Nay, sir, something more than a dabbler.

Diap. You may, perhaps be confirm'd in that opinion, when I tell you that I have written a Tragedy.

Clevel. How, sir?

Diap. Spic and span—prologue, epilogue, and all.

Clevel. You surprize me!

Diap. It has been presented.

Clevel. Well, sir?

Diap. Accepted.

Clevel. Indeed!

Diap. And, to complete your amazement,—it's the very piece that's to be play'd to-night.

Clevel. What, Gunpowder Treason?

Diap. Gunpowder Treason.

Clevel. My dear sir, I give you joy;—if it succeeds, your fame is fixed for ever.

Diap. True; but if it should be damn'd, my laurels will be all changed to a weeping willow.

Clevel. Never mind it, sir.

Diap. Never mind it? What not mind being damn'd? I'd rather stand in the pillory, where turnip-tops may be had gratis, and rotten eggs are but two-pence the score. Do you really think there's nothing in it?

Clevel. A mere trifle—I could name you a dozen authors who are damn'd regularly once a season.

Diap. And are they alive?

Clevel. Alive? So far from killing, it hasn't even cured them. If our modern men of genius were determined not to survive their works, they'd be a short liv'd generation indeed!

Diap. And you really think there is nothing in being hooted, hiss'd, groan'd, cough'd, and pelted off the stage?

Clevel. Not much, sir.

Diap. Give me your hand. I'm glad you're of that opinion; for the favor I have to request is, that you'll attend the performance.

Clevel. To-night, sir?

Diap. Ay, to-night; and if the piece should happen not to succeed, (tho' I don't think there's much danger) that you'd come forward as the author.

Clevel. *(Aside.)* Was there ever any thing so unfortunate?

Diap. He hesitates. *(Aside)*

Clevel. I beg pardon, sir, I had a slight engagement to-night; but your feelings are at stake, and to them I will sacrifice every thing.

Diap. My dear fellow you make me the happiest of men—What can I do for you?

Clevel. Nothing, sir.

Diap. Nothing?

Clevel. That I dare ask.

Diap. Dare ask? What is it you dare not ask?

Clevel. You have a niece, sir, who—

Diap. Nay, Cleveland, any thing else. My house is yours—my purse is yours, but my niece—Look'ee, Cleveland, you are a very good fellow, a brave fellow, a handsome fellow, nay, a very sensible fellow; but you'll excuse me, you have no genius—give but a striking proof of genius, and—

Clevel. And what then, sir?

Diap. Why, then you shall stand a chance with the best of them.

Clevel. In that hope I live.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Wormwood, sir.

Diap. We'll see him. [*Exit Servant.* I sent to him to attend the reading of the piece—you have no objection to be introduced to him as the author.

Clevel. None in the world; but as he is the

dramatic critic of the day, suppose we reserve that discovery till we have learnt from him the public opinion.

Diap. An excellent thought.—He comes.

Enter WORMWOOD.

Wormw. My dear friend—*(To Diaper.)* Mr. Cleveland, your servant—I fear I interrupt business.

Diap. Oh, no, not in the least. Any thing new abroad?—Now we shall have it.

(Aside to Cleveland.)

Wormw. Oh, yes, plenty of novelty. A new Comedy to-night at one house; and a new Tragedy at the other.

Clevel. Pray sir, what do they say of the Tragedy?

Wormw. I understand a most entertaining performance.

Diap. Indeed! *(Pleased.)*

Wormw. Full of the vis comica.

Diap. Vis comica! What, the Tragedy?

Wormw. Why not? Modern Comedies are composed to make us sad, and why shou'dn't modern Tragedies be written to make us merry? It's as natural to laugh at a funeral, as to cry at a wedding.

Diap. Why, then, I suppose you think there's a fair chance of its being———Eh?

Wormw. To a certainty—hiss'd off the stage to-night, complimented by the critics to-morrow, and the third day the author will receive

the condolence of his friends, which, to the shrinking sensibility of an unsuccessful poet, is like brine applied to the back of a soldier smarting from the halberts.

Diap. I think we've carried the joke far enough. *(Aside to Cleveland.)*

Clevel. Of that you're the best judge.

Diap. You know the unfortunate gentleman, I suppose?

Wormw. Oh, no—do you?

Diap. I do—shall I introduce you?

Wormw. I've no objection in the world, if he's a friend of yours.

Diap. Mr. Cleveland. *(Introducing him.)*

Wormw. Nay, my dear sir, you can't be in earnest

Diap. No? 'tis the very peice we are going to read.

Wormw. Zounds, Diaper, this was unhandsome to entrap me into an abuse of my friend; but you'll recollect, Mr. Cleveland, what I have been saying is not my own opinion—mere rumour,—the idle report of the day.

Clevel. No apology, sir; you are a critic by profession, and have but exercised your usual privilege, to sentence an author before trial, and dissect him before execution.

Diap. Come, let's to business. Wormwood, you're a true friend, but I trust you'll turn out a false prophet.

Wormw. I hope so too. Excuse me, sir, for a minute, I'll follow you immediately

[*Exeunt Diaper and Cleveland.*

Cleveland the author of the piece? Then the success of it must be prevented. If he should raise himself as high in the estimation of the uncle, as he already stands in the opinion of the niece, my hopes of obtaining her will be forlorn indeed! yes, yes, whatever it cost, the success of his play must be prevented. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A room in* DIAPER'S *House.*

FRANK *sitting in an Elbow Chair reading a manuscript.*

Frank. Sad stuff! this is very sad stuff indeed! I wonder so many authors prefer venting their nonsense in blank verse, unless it be to convince the world, that they can write without rhyme or reason. *(Bell rings.)* Strange that nobody answers that bell.

Enter SUSAN.

Susan. Lord! Mr. Frank, can't you hear the bell?

Frank. It's not my master's,

Susan. What then?

Frank. You know I can never hear any other, Susan.

Susan. Well, Mr. Frank?

Frank. Sit down, and I'll read you a Tragedy.

Susan. (Sitting down.) A Tragedy? what, a real Tragedy? Is there plenty of love in it?

Frank. Brimful of love.

Susan. And murder?

Frank. Murder, ay, and manslaughter too. You shall have the blowing up of the two houses of Parliament.

Susan. Well, that must be vastly moving! But, is it a downright Tragedy, or is it a Tragical Comedy?

Frank. Oh, no—its a comical Tragedy.

DIAPER *steals in behind.*

Diap. So, I have found the felons! I'll wait, and see the effect. *(Aside.)*

Susan. What is it call'd, Mr. Frank?

Frank. Gunpowder Treason, or the Fifth of November. Come, as we're a little straightened for time, we'll begin with the fourth act.

Diap. Now for it. *(Aside.)*

Frank. (Reads) "Act IV. Scene I. The condemned Hole in Newgate—"Guy Faux discovered sitting at a table, in a pensive attitude"—natural enough when a man's going to be hang'd.

Diap. To be sure it is. *(Aside.)*

Frank. "Enter his wife"—these Tragic authors always introduce a man's wife to heighten the distress—"Enter his wife and three daughters, in black sattin, and the governess in bombazeen,"—an admirable distinction, and shews the author to be a complete master of the etiquette of stage mourning.

Diap. Yes, I think I've studied that to some purpose. *(Aside.)*

Susan. Well, but Mr. Frank, they oughtn't to go into mourning till he's hang'd.

Frank. True; but what signifies what ought to be, when a Dramatic author has determined to produce effect? Besides a good wife should always be prepared for the worst. *(Reads)* "Guy Faux seeing his wife and children, starts three paces."—Just a hop, step and jump backwards.

Diap. (Aside) Does the rascal banter?

Frank. Now attend—

(Starts back three paces and exclaims.)

"This is too much!—weep not, my drooping
"love,
"Nor you, my pretty little ones, nor you,
"Fair sable Guardian"—

Fair, sable Guardian! well, well, that may do.

Frank. "Fair sable Guardian of these mourn-
"ing Flow'rs;
"By heav'ns I'd rather die the thing I am,
"Than live to be the Monarch of the Globe,
"Tho' death shall clasp me in his cold em-
brace,
"Not he, that kill'd the cow, immortal Guy,
"Shall live in story, more renown'd than I."

SUSAN *becomes gradually affected and bursts into tears.* DIAPER *accompanies the reading with action.*

Diap. Dam' me, but she's a girl of feeling!

(Aside.)

Frank. Why, what the devil's the matter

with you? why you're not blubbering—Ha, ha, ha! why, you're not crying in earnest.

Susan. Lord, Mr. Frank, how can you be so hard-hearted? I protest, it's wonderful pathetic. I don't think I should ever be able to sit it out.

Frank. No, nor any body else, I believe.

Susan. Do you know who writ it?

Frank. Not I;—some obscure dog, or other, or we must have heard of him at our club. Some new settler in Grub-Street, I suppose.

Diap. Grub-Street!! The rascal!

Frank. Some Garreteer, who receives inspiration thro' a skylight. If he doesn't mend his hand, it will be some time before he gets out of the attics; but tho' I can't tell you who wrote it, I can tell you who will review it.

Susan. Who, Mr. Frank?

Frank. I shall—and the Lord have mercy upon him.

Diap. (Coming forward) Why, you impudent rascal!

Susan. Mercy on us! now we shall have a Tragedy in good earnest.

Diap. How could you have the audacity to take the manuscript out of my study?

Frank. Audacity? when I lived with my Lord Skimwit, he never published any thing without consulting me.

Diap. Indeed!

Frank. Never, sir.

Susan. Lord, how impudent he carries it!
(Aside.)

Frank. To say the truth, he had so high an opinion of my judgment, that he never ventured to print so much as a song, or an Epigram, 'till I had given them the last finishing touch.

Diap. Really?

Frank. On my honour, sir.
(Susan endeavours to stop him.)

Diap. And so, because you gave the last finishing touch to my Lord Skimwit's Epigrams, you think yourself at liberty to steal my manuscripts?

Frank. Steal?

Susan. Do, be quiet, Frank. *(Aside.)*

Frank. Oh, no, Sir, I had no intention of stealing a syllable, whatever other defects I may have, I believe my originality has never been doubted.

Susan. Lord, Frank, how can you be so provoking? *(Aside.)*

Diap. Get out of the room.

Frank. It will never do in its present state, depend on't.

Diap. Get out of the house.

Frank. If it was mine.

Diap. Get out of the street.

Frank. I should cut it down to a farce.

Diap. Get out of the parish.

Frank. I am gone; but you'll remember, I gave you warning. [*Exit.*

Diap. Warning? the rascal shall go to-morrow, tho' I pay him a month's wages in advance. *(Shuts the door)* Susan.

Susan. (Aside) What will he do to me?

Diap. Come hither, Susan.

Susan. (Falls on her knees) Oh, sir, pray, sir, don't be angry, indeed it was all along of Mr. Frank.

Diap. Angry!—Well, well, I'm not angry, that is, not very angry—I mustn't betray myself. *(Aside.)* Come hither, I say.

Susan. Indeed, Sir, I should never have thought of such a thing.

Diap. Well, well, don't cry; though you have done wrong, yet you're a girl of feeling.

Susan. Yes, sir.

Diap. You've a heart form'd for pathos.

Susan. Have I, sir?

Diap. And one of these days you shall read the whole of it.

Susan. Thank ye, sir.

Diap. I'll read it to you myself.

Susan. What, now, sir?

Diap. Now? no, not now, Susan; but some day or other, when you're not very busy. In the mean time, don't let that fellow, Frank, persuade you its a good joke to laugh at a Tragedy.

Susan. Never, if I can help it, Sir.

Diap. He's the worst reader in England—Trust your own judgement.

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Susan. I will, sir.

Diap. You've a very excellent taste.

Susan. La, sir!

Diap. And, Susan, as since the ladies have left off wearing clothes, your perquisites are not very great that way, here's a trifle to buy you a new gown.

Susan. Thank ye, sir,—your servant, sir.

Diap. Take care of that fellow, Frank.

[*Exit.*

Susan. Yes, sir, Mr. Frank's a very pretty reader notwithstanding. (*Aside.*)

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Diaper's Garden.*

Enter JANE DIAPER, *as from the reading of the Play.*

JANE.

IF I have any skill in physiognomy, my uncle is the real author, his countenance in the reading of the play betrayed more the anxiety of a parent than the solicitude of a friend. They come—I'll observe him further. *(She retires.)*

Enter DIAPER *and* WORMWOOD.

Diap. Well, Wormwood, now we are alone, what's your opinion?

Wormw. Don't press me, my dear sir, Cleveland is your friend, and he is my friend, and though in the present case, I may possibly think he has not been his own friend—but don't press me.

Diap. Nay, I insist upon having your opinion.

Wormw. Well, if you insist.—

Diap. Peremptorily.

Wormw. Why, then, between ourselves, I'm glad neither you nor I am the author.

Diap. Indeed!

Wormw. I think your friend's Tragedy—but

why will you extort from me what will give me so much pain to deliver?

Diap. Nay, nay, don't be afraid; if I can bear it, I think you may.

Wormw. Why, then, I think your friend's Tragedy is the most unqualified nonsense—I speak it with infinite pain.

Diap. I see you do.

Wormw. That ever defied the understanding—you are putting me on the rack.

Diap. Never mind—never mind—can't you be composed as I am.

Wormw. That ever defied the understanding, or exhausted the patience of an audience.

Diap. That's your real opinion?

Wormw. Yes; now you're not pleas'd.

Diap. Oh yes.

Wormw. You're not satisfied?

Diap. Perfectly satisfied, and very much oblig'd to you; but, do you really think it so very bad?

Wormw. Shall I repeat my opinion?

Diap. By no means. I won't put you again upon the rack. Here and there I think the author has struck out a new idea.

Wormw. I don't know how many new ideas he may have struck out, but I'm sure he hasn't left one in.

Diap. Indeed! I rather think there are some passages in that play that would do honour to any poet.

Wormw. Ay, any modern poet.

Diap. Modern poet! Well, and what have you to say against modern poets? Whatever modern poets may be, modern critics, I believe, are not much better; though it is certainly much easier to find fault with a good play, than to write a bad one. How many people of your acquaintance could write a better?

Wormw. Very few, I'm afraid; but I don't know a single one that could write a worse.

Diap. No.

Wormw. Not one.

Diap. I don't think you need quite despair of that, till you have tried yourself.—I hit him there, I think. *(Aside.)*

Wormw. My dear, sir, you grow personal.

Diap. Personal! And who was personal first? The man, who abuses my friend, abuses me; and the man who abuses my friend's Tragedy.—

Wormw. Abuses your Tragedy, of course.

Diap. My tragedy! no such thing. He begins to suspect me,—I must tack about here. *(Aside.)* [*After some struggle he produces a laugh*] He! he! he! why,—He! he! he!—you didn't.—Ha! ha! ha!—you didn't suppose I was in earnest?

Wormw. No.

Diap. Ha! ha! ha!—did you ever—Ha! ha! ha!—know one author praise another in earnest?

Wormw. Then you really agree with me in opinion?

Diap. Completely—Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—

[*puts his hand to his side, as if suddenly seized with a pain there.*]

Wormw. My dear friend, what's the matter?

Diap. My old complaint; I never can indulge in a hearty fit of laughter, but I'm taken with a pain in the side.

Wormw. Well, well, we'll finish our strictures another time.

Diap. If you please—I shall see you after the performance.

Wormw. Certainly;—for the present, adieu! Ha! ha! ha!

Diap. Ha! ha! ha! don't tempt me, or I shall certainly have a return of my pain.

Wormw. I'll spare you then till we meet again. [*Exit.*

Diap. Spare me! I wonder how I could ever mistake that fellow for a man of taste. He can't, after this, suspect the piece to be mine, I think.

Jane. (*Coming forward.*) So, I must touch a different string. (*Aside.*)

Diap. Ha! Jane, is it you! I'll have her judgment.—Well, what did you think of the Tragedy?

Jane. Nay, sir, what signifies my opinion?

Diap. A great deal,—men judge from their heads, and are generally mistaken,—women decide from their hearts, and are always right.

Jane. (*Aside.*) Now then, for a solemn face, and a little of the true cant of criticism. Why, sir, in the first place, I can hardly bring myself

to believe that so finished a work can be the production of so young an author.

Diap. Indeed.

Jane. Such a profound knowledge of human nature.

Diap. D'ye think so?

Jane. Such a nice discrimination of character.

Diap. Excellent! *(Aside.)*

Jane. I am right. *(Aside.)* So intricate a plot without the least perplexity.

Diap. (Aside.) I can't bear it.

Jane. My dear sir, you must excuse me—it must be the work of some literary veteran.

Diap. O no!—you are wrong—you are wrong.

Jane. I'll be hang'd then. *(Aside.)* There is one scene, which I'm sure Mr. Cleveland could never come up to.

Diap. Indeed! what, the prison scene?

Jane. Right, sir; is it possible he could have written that without assistance?

Diap. Well, well, to confess the truth, I did throw a flash or two into that scene.—But d'ye like it?

Jane. Like it! that scene was written in the very climax of inspiration.

Diap. It was.

Jane. On the very tiptoe of fancy.

Diap. You are right.

Jane. The author must have been, as the poet expresses it, in a fine phrenzy.

Diap. He was.

Jane. He must have been half out of his wits.

Diap. Three parts at least.

Jane. In the very heav'n of poetry.

Diap. I was,—I remember when I wrote that scene.

Jane. What! then, sir? *(quickly.)*

Diap. When I corrected it, I mean.

Jane. No, you don't—you mean what you say. I suspected you at the reading, sir.

Diap. Suspected me?

Jane. No mother ever watched with more anxiety her daughter's first appearance at a ball, than you did the effect of your play.

Diap. My play?

Jane. Yes, sir, yours. Mr. Wormwood might have discovered you, but he took the wrong way. Like the man in the fable, you drew your cloak closer at the rude breath of censure, but threw it off at the warm sunshine of praise, and stood forth, as every man should do, the father of your own child.

Diap. You are a witch, I believe.

Jane. I am a woman, sir, yet I can keep a secret.

Diap. Well, well, the Tragedy is mine—Murder will out, I find.

Jane. Yes, sir, and treason too.

Diap. Well, well, keep the secret, and——

Jane. You will not encourage Mr. Wormwood to continue his addresses to me?

Diap. Nay, I didn't say that; however, be a

good girl, and I don't know what may happen. I'm now going in search of Cleveland, to give him my last instructions. Heigho! [*Exit.*

Jane. But I must first have an interview with him, to see if something can't be made of this discovery. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of Diaper's Garden.*

Enter FRANK *and* SUSAN.

Susan. Nay, Mr. Frank, how can you be so obstinate? If you would but make an apology, all might yet be well.

Frank. No, I've made up my mind,—I'm too much of a fine gentleman, it seems, for my master; and he's too little of the fine gentleman for me; its impossible we can ever sympathize.

Susan. And who, when you are gone, will read me novels, and tragedies, and comedies, and operas? I shall break my heart if you leave us; you know we hav'n't yet got half through "The Benevolent Footpad," and have finished only the first act of "The Heroic Chamber-"maid." Oh, Mr. Frank, when you are gone, except now and then looking out of the window, I shall have nothing to attend to but my business. (*Cries.*)

Frank. 'Twill be a very hard case certainly; but what's to be done; I should like to give the finishing touch to the dramatic part of your education, my pretty Susan; but as for

the rest of the family, I shall as heartily take leave of them as I did of my last fit of the gout.

Susan. And what do you mean to do when you're out of place?

Frank. What most fashionable footmen do in place,—nothing.

Susan. I hear my Lord Squander has parted with his valet.

Frank. So I find; but there are some things in his Lordship's character that I don't altogether approve of. You know I'm particularly nice as to character;—besides, possibly he would not agree to my terms.

Susan. No,—what are they?

Frank. Why, you see, if I go into a family again, to prevent any subsequent misunderstanding, I shall insist upon having the first night of every new play,—my Saturday evenings for the opera, (can't miss the opera) and as I am always extremely vapoured, when under the influence of a provincial atmosphere, that the family do, on no account, rusticate above four months in the year. But who comes this way with so thoughtful a pace?

Susan. 'Tis Mr. Wormwood;—now, if you would but mention the affair to him, I'm sure he'd speak a good word for you.

Frank. Would he? then I shall be the first person he has spoken a good word for since he turn'd critic.

Susan. There can be no harm in trying him however.

Frank. Well, Susan, to oblige you.

Susan. Do, Mr. Frank; for though he's a bitter spoken gentleman, he may sometimes do a good turn for all that.

Frank, Stand aside, and leave us together.

[*Exit Susan.*

(WORMWOOD *entering.*)

Wormw. That must be the scheme certainly. By procuring the condemnation of the play, I shall not only oblige the uncle, but render him contemptible in the eyes of the niece. Ha! *(seeing Frank.)* This fellow may be of service. Frank.

Frank. Sir.

Wormw. You are determined, I hear, to leave your situation?

Frank. To say the truth, sir, I see no honourable mode of avoiding it.

Wormw. Tis a pity that so good a master should part with so excellent a servant.

Frank. True, sir; but 'tisn't every body knows when they're well off.

Wormw. Yet, I suppose, if a reconciliation could be effected upon fair and honourable terms.

Frank. I should have no objection, sir.

Wormw. Why, then, I think I could put you in the way of not only reinstating yourself in Mr. Diaper's good graces, but of standing higher in his favour than ever.

Frank. Indeed, sir?

Wormw. You know there's a tragedy to be acted to-night, for the first time—

Frank. Yes; and for the last I believe.

Wormw. Of that, being yourself a poet, you are no mean judge.

Frank. Pardon me, sir, tho' I still continue to review a little sometimes, yet I've determined to write no more. I've a great respect for the muses, 'tis true, yet I never mean to enter again into their service; for, without exception, they give the shortest commons, the worst wages, and the shabbiest liveries of any ladies about town.

Wormw. Very good! But, to the point, your master affects to interest himself for the author,—to whom he really wishes as much success——

Frank. As one author generally does to another.

Wormw. Right—Now, if you could, by any means, contrive to be notoriously, and riotously forward in the condemnation of the play——

Frank. You think I should confer a service on my master?

Wormw. One that he'd never forget.

Frank. And by that means serve myself?

Wormw. It would do your business, depend on't.

Frank. Then, depend on it, sir, my business is done.

Wormw. You needn't tell your master that I gave you the hint.

Frank. Oh, no, sir.

Wormw. I mean you shall have the whole credit of it yourself.

Frank. Thank ye, sir—I'll about it instantly.

Wormw. And, Frank—

Frank. Sir.

Wormw. Suppose you take one or two of the men servants to assist you?

Frank. I will, sir.

Wormw. Call here to-morrow morning, and leave the rest to me.

Frank. Sir, you have laid me under an everlasting obligation. [*Exit.*

Wormw. How, if the play should succeed? That's next to impossible. This fellow is a critic by profession, and your professed critic is as infallible in foretelling the fall of a play, as a physician in prophecying the death of a patient. In both cases their own credit is at stake, and it would be hard indeed, if they should be wrong in a prediction, of which the fulfilment depends chiefly on themselves.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Garden.*

CLEVELAND *and* JANE DIAPER *meeting.*

Clevel. Jane!

Jane. Cleveland, I have a secret for you.

Clevel. Nay, I have a secret for you too.

Jane. But, as I am a woman, and have already kept it a full half hour, you must give me the preference.

Clevel. Well, what is it?

Jane. The play—

Clevel. What play?

Jane. The tragedy—

Clevel. Well?

Jane. Is my uncle's.

Clevel. I know it.

Jane. Don't you pity him?

Clevel. Pity him?—pity me.

Jane. You?

Clevel. Yes, me; I've bound myself to attend the representation.

Jane. Nay, then, you are, indeed, to be pitied.

Clevel. Yes, Jane, I am indeed to be pitied; for the comedy——

Jane. Well?

Clevel. The new comedy, that's to be play'd at the other house——

Jane. What of it?

Clevel. Is mine.

Jane. Your's Cleveland.

Clevel. Mine, as I hope to be saved.

Jane. And was I the last person to be trusted with such a secret?

Clevel. By heavens, you are the only one.

Jane. Does nobody know it but ourselves?

Clevel. Not a human creature.

Jane. Then you have no friends to support it?

Clevel. Never mind; if it has merit, it will find friends, if not, it deserves none.

Jane. I will attend it.

Clevel. Nay, nay, the trial will be too much.

Jane. I feel it will be a trial, yet, don't attempt to dissuade me. I will seek out some gloomy dim-lighted corner of the house, where my varying cheek shall be unnoticed, my beating heart unheard; where hope, unperceived, may elevate, and fear distress me; from whence, if you are successful, I may bear the tidings with the speed of sound, and if you should fail —but I don't think you'll fail,—rather than you should fail, I'll make a speech to the audience myself.

Clevel. My sweet girl, and what will you say to them.

Jane. I will tell them it is the first fond child of your fancy, the growing darling of many anxious days, of some sleepless nights.

Clevel. It is indeed!

Jane. That its success will crown the hopes of two young, and faithful hearts, and that, if it should fail,—but it can't fail—it won't fail—I shall break my heart if it fails.

Clevel. Nay, nay, calm your emotions. It will come fairly and fully before a jury of my countrymen, and tho' I fall by their verdict, I will not arraign their justice. But, hush! your uncle.

Enter DIAPER.

Diap. Ha! what I've caught you together. Now I can guess what you two have been talking about—the play.—Come, come, confess you've been talking about the play.

Jane. You're right, sir.

Diap. Well, Cleveland, the hour approaches.

Clevel. Would it were come, sir!

Diap. Come! would it were past, I say! 'Tis a most momentous period.

Clevel. It is indeed, sir.

Diap. A night, on which my future happiness depends. My whole reputation is at stake.

Clevel. And mine too, sir.

Diap. Your reputation? Nay, as a poet, you have no reputation to lose.

Clevel. No, sir; but I have one to gain.

Diap. Ay; but till you have written yourself, you don't know the feelings of an author upon such an occasion.

Jane. True, sir; but he may guess at them.

Clevel. I can indeed.

Diap. Why, I declare you're quite agitated.

Clevel. Most deeply, sir.

Diap. Poor fellow! poor fellow! I don't think you could feel more, if the case were your own.

Clevel. I cou'dn't upon my honour, sir.

Diap. Well, well, don't let's despair. You'll do your best for me?

Clevel. You may depend on that, sir.

Diap. Above all things, remember to restrain your feelings, and don't be too vehement in your applause. An author, who would outlive the malice of his enemies, is often destroyed by the too active kindness of his friends.

Jane. As a child, who miraculously escapes the physicians, is overlaid by the fondness of the nurse.

Diap. Come, the coach is waiting for you—You don't know what a fever and ague I have upon me. Yet the cold fits are so much more violent than the hot ones, that—Come along—As the man in the play says

"This is the night
"That quite unmakes me, or that makes me quite."

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Diaper's House.*

Diaper discovered reading. After some attempts, he puts down the book.

DIAPER.

IT wont do—I find it's impossible for a man's mind to be in two places at once. Nothing can divert my attention. *(Noise without.)* What the devil's that?

JEFFERY *without.*

Jeff. Not see him! I must see him, and will see him.

Diap. Sure 'tis Jeffery's voice.

Jeff. *(Entering.)* I tell you he's a ruined man.

Diap. Ruin'd! then he comes from the theatre.

Jeff. Oh, sir!

Diap. Speak!

Jeff. I can't speak.

Diap. Don't stand looking at me with that dismal face; but tell me the worst.

Jeff. Then you have heard of it.

Diap. No, but I can guess;—its all over.

Jeff. Over! I wish it was;—it's raging with the utmost violence.

Diap. Raging! what's raging?

Jeff. Hav'n't you heard of the fire in the Minories.

Diap. Damn the Minories!

Jeff. Your warehouse is in flames.

Diap. That for my warehouse!

Jeff. It's half consumed.

Diap. Let it make a finish. How the rascal frighten'd me *(Aside)*

Jeff. He has heard the news from some other quarter and is gone mad. The engines can't come to play.

Diap. Play! never mind—the actors can play, the actors can play.

Jeff. Actors, sir! in less than half an hour it will be hissing at the water's edge.

Diap. Hissing! don't talk to me about hissing. Don't you see I'm engaged, and can't attend to such trifles.

Jeff. Trifles! Ten thousand pounds the least halfpenny, and not a farthing insured.

CLEVELAND *Enters.*

Diap. My dear boy!

Clevel. All's lost, sir.

Jeff. I told him so, but he would not attend to me.

Diap. Quite damn'd?

Clevel. Beyond redemption, sir.

Diap. Fire and furies!

Jeff. Water I say—If the engines could but have play'd—

Diap. Will you get out of the room? Do Cleveland assist me to murder this fellow, that I may attend to you in cool blood.

[*They push Jeffery out of the room, he struggling violently*]

And now my dear boy, how was it?

Clevel. I will be as particular sir, as my agitation will let me.

Diap. Disguise nothing from me.

Clevel. The first act went off smoothly enough.

Diap. I thought it would.

Clevel. As the curtain dropp'd on the second, there was a slight murmur of disapprobation.

Diap. Umph!

Clevel. They recovered their good humour in the third.

Diap. Well?

Clevel. But, about the middle of the fourth—

Diap. Ay—

Clevel. In that most distressing scene—

Diap. What, the prison scene?

Clevel. My dear sir,—

Diap. I expected there would be a party.

Clevel. My dear sir, the whole house cou'dn't be of the party.

Diap. Yes they might very easily. Would I had been there!

Clevel. I'm very glad you were not, sir. What could you have done?

Diap. Done! I'd have order'd the engines to play upon them. Pshaw! I'm distracted. I'd

have—I'd have—I'd have read the riot act, and clear'd the house. Where were my friends?

Clevel. Where a man's friends generally are when he wants them,—somewhere else.

Diap. Was Wormwood there?

Clevel. Oh yes, he was there.

Diap. And did he exert himself?

Clevel. Till he was hoarse. He joined the opposition throughout, and when the piece was attempted to be given out for a second representation, he howl'd and hiss'd as if he had borrowed the throats of Cerberus, and the head of Medusa.

Diap. Impossible!

Clevel. Very true, sir.

Enter WILLIAM.

Will. Mr. Wormwood, sir.

Diap. Very good—I'll see him.

[*Exit* WILLIAM.

Clevel. Now, sir, you'll have an opportunity of trying him. Only affect to rejoice at what gives you so much pain, and he'll unbosom himself presently. That I may be no check upon you. I'll retire. Oh, Jane! Jane!

(Aside.)

Diap. Do;—but be within call.

Clevel. I'll await your summons.

[*Exit.*

Diap. He comes—Let me endeavour to dissemble.

WORMWOOD *enters, and after looking at* DIAPER *for some time, speaks.*

Wormw. I give you joy.

Diap. I thank you.

Wormw. You never saw any thing done more completely.

Diap. So I understand.

Wormw. I wish you had been there.

Diap. So do I.

Wormw. Though, perhaps, it would have brought on your pain in the side.

Diap. Most likely.

Wormw. Yet! you've lost a most excellent treat.

Diap. A very high one, no doubt.

Wormw. You'd have been delighted.

Diap. As a dog is, whilst they're tying a cannister to his tail. *(Aside.)*

Wormw. You needn't say I told you; but you're under particular obligations to Frank, I assure you.

Diap. What, my Frank?

Wormw. Your Frank. I wish you could have heard him.

Diap. Thank ye—I would rather have heard the war-whoop whilst being scalp'd. *(Aside.)* Then you think, but for Frank, the piece might have succeeded.

Wormw. I hav'n't a doubt of it. And the town might have been pestered with it for this month to come. Who d'ye think sent him?

Diap. Was it you?

Wormw. It was.

Diap. I can stand this no longer. Mr. Cleveland.

Enter CLEVELAND.

Wormw. [*To Diaper.*] Cleveland! he must have overheard us—No matter—I must do what is well bred upon the occasion notwithstanding. Mr. Cleveland, though unfortunately not able to congratulate you on your success, yet, as a friend, permit me to condole with you on your disappointment.

Clevel. I thank you, sir, for the kindness of your intentions; but you are somewhat premature.

Diap. Premature! What does he mean? *(Aside.)*

Wormw. Indeed? I thought your piece had entirely fail'd.

Clevel. No, sir, my piece has not yet fail'd. How terrible is this suspense! *(Aside.)*

Diap. What's he at now? *(Aside to Cleveland.)* Cleveland—my dear Cleveland, you're not going to betray me?

Clevel. Be under no apprehension, sir.

Wormw. *(Aside.)* What the devil can he mean? Oh, you intend, perhaps, to give it another trial.

Clevel. No, sir, its first trial is not yet over.

Wormw. Now I understand you.

Diap. *(Aside.)* Its more than I can.

Wormw. You mean to take your revenge on the audience, by printing it?

Clevel. No, sir; the audience and I have not yet quarrell'd.

Diap. What the devil does he mean? *(Aside.)*

Clevel. I have done my best to entertain them; and if my fortune does but equal my endeavours——

JANE DIAPER *enters.*

Jane. Victory! Victory!

Clevel. Successful!

Jane. Beyond your hopes, and equal to your wishes.

(They rush into each others arms.)

Diap. Does any body understand this?

Wormw. S'death! if that should be the case—

Clevel. Oh, sir, excuse the indecorum of our transports! The comedy—

Diap. Well?

Wormw. It must be so. *(Aside.)*

Clevel. That has been received with approbation——

Jane. With enthusiasm.

Clevel. Is mine.

Diap. Yours?

Clevel. Mine, sir.

Jane. It is indeed. Oh Cleveland!

Clevel. Nay, nay, restrain your joy.

Diap. Ay, do restrain your raptures; don't you see with what a temperate delight Mr. Wormwood bears the discovery. Give me your hand, give me your hand, my dear fellow. May the spirit of poetry forsake me, if I don't

feel as much joy in your success, as mortification at my own want of it. Well, my dear friend, *(To Wormwood,)* what do you think of all this?

Wormw. I am astonished.

Diap. Are you? Well then, now I'll amaze you. The tragedy, which you and Frank have just howl'd to death.

Wormw. Well, sir?

Diap. Was mine.

Wormw. Confusion! *(Aside.)*

Diap. Cleveland, here's my niece. May you be happy with her; and, as for you, my dear friend, I wish you as happy as disappointed malice can make you. In short, without meaning to be rude, I wish you were out of my house.

Wormw. A hint would have been sufficient, sir; but remember, I have some little influence on the public opinion, and am not to be insulted with impunity. [*Exit.*

Diap. Egad, that's true; we must not provoke him too far.

Clevel. Heed him not, sir; his spleen will exhaust itself in a newspaper paragraph, or an epigram at most.

From such rude snarlers, sullen and severe.
We turn to more impartial judges here.

FINIS.

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